**Points to Remember about Theme and   
Writing the Thesis Statement about Literature**

**Narrative** **Technique**

* Narrative technique is the method, the process, the system, the scheme, the design of a work of literature; and the term refers to the literal, concrete elements of fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction, both globally and singly.
* Technique may be the structure or organization of a plot or drama (chronological, use of flashback, circular, etc) or the structure of an argument in a speech or the verse form in poetry.
* Characterization is technique. An author of fiction or drama may have the primary focus on characterization or on setting, for example. An author of a poem may employ sound devices or particular kinds of images or poetic shifts in the development of the poem.
* Technique is the concrete means through which themes arise organically from the work of literature. Theme is the abstraction, the “mysterious” as Billy Collins explains, a truth about life embodied in the work.

**Theme**

* Theme is the central and unifying concept of a story and will account for all the major details of the story.
* Always state theme as a sentence, never as one word (War destroys the lives of the innocent.).
* Never state theme as a cliché.
* Always state theme as a universal truth about life, as a general statement that is true for all people everywhere for all time rather than about a specific character (for Hemingway’s “Old Man at the Bridge”: war destroys the lives of the innocent; not war destroys the life of the old man at the bridge)
* Theme always arises for the literary text; for example, in fiction, the climax of the story is a good place to look to think about theme (if the old man at the bridge in Hemingway’s story “Old Man at the Bridge” had survived and recovered his animals instead of being killed by the artillery as foreshadowed, the theme would have been a different one).

A **thesis statement** about a literary work is always a connection between technique and theme.

* Example of a thesis statement about literature:

In “Old Man at the Bridge,” Ernest Hemingway focuses on *the helplessness and downfall of the old man*\*\* to show how war destroys the lives of the innocent+.

\*\***technique  
+theme**